students at the Minsk officers school were also recruited exclusively from among Belorussians, /15/ and all the training as well as the commands were given in Belorussian. A special corps of specialists on Belorussia, with the experienced philologist, Baranovskii, as their leader, was selected for work in the officers' school. All the military regulations of the Red Army were translated into Belorussian. But the Belorussianization of these two divisions was sharply curtailed after 1930, the Belorussian specialists were fired from the officers school, and a significant number of them were subsequently arrested together with their leader. By 1932 no traces remained of the Belorussianization of these two territorial divisions. The Second Division, quartered in Minsk, had its name changed from Territorial to Experienced Regular Division, and the Belorussianization of parts of the Red Army was pronounced a harmful diversionary activity.

At one point, in order to strengthen the Soviet state, the slogan of "going to the soil" was promoted in Belorussia. The main reason for this was to fill the Soviet state apparatus with local workers independent of their nationality, and by this it was intended that the local Party workers, being native inhabitants of the area and knowing the language, customs, and way of life of the Belorussians, would be the more close to the national masses. However this campaign did not have any widespread success and was swallowed up by ensuing campaigns which were of a broader nature.

Propaganda among the Peasants

In 1924, a movement began in Belorussia under the noisy title of "Let's face the land," and it involved the mass dispatch of responsible workers from the centers into the rayon and village soviets for agitation and organizational work there. When the NEP had attained a steady tempo the peasantry found itself in a very difficult situation. The prices of agricultural products were low and those of factory made products immeasurably high. For example, a peasant had to pay no less than 320 kilograms of grain for an ordinary Tula samovar. At the time the hard and reliable Soviet chervonets had acquired a solid position in the economy. But the peasants had no chervontsi . . . To raise the depressed mood of the peasantry propagandists were sent out for extended periods, and some of them were even left in the rayons for permanent work as responsible Party leaders. It was decided simultaneously to advance non-Party peasants and factory workers to responsible positions. Such a new worker was

557 665 called a 'vydvizhenets' /promoted worker/. Generally such workers were appointed as deputies of various kinds; independent work was not given to them /16/ because of their non-Party status and the fear of distortions in the Party line . . . To tell the truth they often had to sail with the wind, orient themselves according to Party workers, and compromise with their convictions, especially in settling peasant problems. The leaders of the Belorussian national movement made use of this well-advertised and all-embracing campaign[1] to send out their best propagandists for further work in planting the Soviet state apparatus "in the soil" and especially to select vydvizhenets workers /for their own ends/. It would be possible to mention many successful vydvizhenets, as examples. For instance in the Slutskiy Okrug, the peasant vydvizhenets Fedorovich enjoyed unquestionable authority, occupying the post of deputy president of the okrug executive committee. The peasant vydvizhenets Dubovtsev made such a favorable impression with his work that as a result he even became Deputy President of the Belorussian Supreme Soviet. He possessed the necessary qualifications in administrative work, was modest both in his personal life and on the job, and a promoter of the national work. Part of the vydvizhenets group returned to their former jobs in the kolkhozes and factories, and a very insignificant portion entered the Party.

647 The official organs which had the job of guiding the national work were the so-called National Commissions in the center and the district centers. The staff of a National Committee was composed of representatives of the separate nationalities. However they had no practical or organizational significance. The work was carried on outside their auspices and without their guidance. It was almost a dead superstructure of which there were and are many in the Soviet system.

Belorussians in Poland

661 563 Everything done by the nationalists in the B. S. S. R. had a colossal influence upon the Belorussians, especially upon the youth and intelligentsia, living in western Belorussia, which was under Polish rule. There they had no right even having been deprived of the right to acquire property. Without renouncing its nationality the intelligentsia could not find work. The Belorussian primary and high schools were closed, although they were

[1] [To raise the morale of the peasants caught in an unfavorable economic situation. Cf, p. 19, Cat, 116--Analyst]

665 unaffected and accessible. He took under his direct protection and guidance the young Communists who were just out of the Komsomol and resolutely promoted them to rather responsible positions, taking notice of their successes and helping them in their work. Most Belorussian Party workers considered Sharangovich as one of their own and trusted him.

The Estonian, Gei, was at that time the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Party in Belorussia. He had been sent /43/ out by the Kremlin around the end of 1929. Before his appointment nothing either good or bad was known of him, and it is possible that he was a lower level functionary somewhere in the R. S. F. S. R. In any case, his appointment to Belorussia was looked upon as a promotion since the region was regarded as a rather responsible field of Party activity. Its position on the border, the complicated state of its national affairs, and the policy which was being followed at the time within Belorussia, demanded that the Party secretary be adaptable, tactful, and careful in his work. Gei was not noted for his masterful organizational ability, and in his work as director of a republican Party he was not outstanding. He did not vaunt himself, nor induce others to do so. By nature he had no friends nor in fact any close relationships. Nothing was altered in the organization of work by Sharangovich's arrival. At that time everything was subordinated to accomplishing one task -- the speediest realization of the collectivization in Belorussia. Hundreds of workers were sent out in brigades throughout the regions and districts to give on the spot assistance. Telegrams with the sternest possible directives were dispatched from the center, setting all kinds of requirements and demanding reports. All efforts were aimed at declaring "total collectivization" in Belorussia -- about which a telegram could then be sent to the Kremlin. The kolkhozes were given various high-sounding titles. Here and there the first secretary of the Party was remembered and a kolkhoz named after him. The name Gei was also given to a rather large peat factory not far from Minsk.

During the Ezhovshchina Gei's name was removed from the kolkhozes and also from the peat factory. By this sign the Belorussians were able to guess that Gei had turned up in the camp of the "enemies of the motherland."

557
665 There was a plan afoot, at first discussed very timidly and diffidently in a narrow circle of Belorussian workers, of maneuvering

557 to the point where the first secretary of the Party Central Committee would be a Belorussian. The idea began to catch on more and more obstinately after the arrival of Sharangovich in Minsk. It is conceivable that this aim was furthered by the opposition which developed for the succession to Lenin, and possibly the Belorussians chose this moment as the most appropriate. In any case, there was a tendency to support for the post of first secretary either V. Sharangovich or the president of the Sovnarkom /Council of People's Commissariats/ of the B. S. S. R., N. Goloded. Further blows were being dealt to Gei's already rather weak influence upon the course of events as well as his authority among the leaders. Sharangovich cooperated with him only formally, having gathered under his banner a group of Party secretaries from the local districts. Most of the People's Commissars supported the Sovnarkom President, N. Goloded, whose authority was unquestionable. Although not very highly educated, Goloded possessed great natural abilities and was a skillful leader. /44/ His protectors in Moscow were Molotov, Voroshilov, and Ordzhonikidze. Another prominent figure in Belorussia was the irreplaceable president of the Central Executive Committee of the B. S. S. R., Al. Cherviakov. Gei was almost isolated, and in several cases Goloded simply ignored him. Gei's position was also insecure because he had spent the first years of his work in Belorussia at the time when the national policy was still being promulgated -- when Prishchepov was People's Commissar of Agriculture and had aimed at strengthening the private peasants. It goes without saying that the first signature on all the decisions and decrees of that period concerning cultural reconstruction and the land problem was that of Gei. The Kremlin demanded a more decisive struggle with the Natsdemovshchina and the Prishchepovschina. However, the laurels of "watchfulness" for uncovering "counter-revolution" in the national question belonged to the G. P. U.; it was only after the event that Gei, through the use of academic brigades, was able to provide a foundation for proving the national theories harmful and for justifying the correctness of the 1930 arrests. Gei was recalled from Belorussia in 1931, and some Belorussian leaders saw in this the promise of the speedy realization of their desires to see a Belorussian as first secretary.

After a short while the Kremlin sent the Ingush, N. Gikalo, in place of Gei to Belorussia as first secretary. The hopes of the

537
665 Belorussian leaders had not been justified. By sending Secretary Gikalo, the Kremlin made it very clear to the Belorussian Party leadership that it had no intention of indulging their desires and hopes of altering the established method of appointing the first secretary of the Party in Belorussia. Gikalo's further activities confirmed this in full. Evidently the Kremlin endowed him with wide and extraordinary powers and instructed him to put the Belorussian Party organization in order, forcing it to be subordinate to the one-man leadership of the first secretary. The Belorussians lost very much by this exchange of Gei for Gikalo. The Party summit had clearly miscalculated. Gikalo's subsequent work reduced their role to naught. He employed various methods for subjugating them. According to the etiquette previously in effect, it was considered inappropriate for even the first secretary of the Party to bring along his own collaborators. Gikalo disregarded this convention, and came to Minsk with a private secretary whom he introduced as his aide. Up until then such a position as aide had not even existed in Soviet or Party nomenclature. This one assumed an attitude of complete independence with regard to all Communists, including the leaders, and was very emphatic in insisting that all his orders be fulfilled as though they came from Gikalo himself. Gikalo not only did not oppose this state of affairs but even ordered compliance. /45/ He did not become intimate with anyone, and behaved quite independently. He devoted a lot of attention to the second secretary, Sharangovich. Gikalo knew that he enjoyed a certain amount of popularity and authority among Belorussians, and therefore he endeavored to bring him over to his own side and subordinate him to his influence. He accomplished it rather quickly. He began by issuing instructions that Sharangovich was to be credited with certain services which had previously never even been heard of. By means of propaganda Sharangovich was made the leader of the partisan movement in Belorussia during the Soviet-Polish War. Gikalo arranged to have certain obliging Communists found to organize the collection of signatures on petitions requesting that Sharangovich be decorated for his past services. As a result of this campaign, assisted by intercessions from "up above" in the Central Committee of the Belorussian Communist Party, Sharangovich, twelve years after his "partisan exploits", was decorated by the Soviet government with the Order of the Red Banner, at that time the highest military decoration. Real partisans were secretly offended by this injustice

537 and felt that it was not much use performing services and deeds of
665 valor since what was really needed was sponsorship and protection. By this skillful maneuver Gikalo broke up the consolidation of the Belorussian Communist summit, and Sharangovich fell wholly under his influence.

The Communists who were grouped around Goloded, the President of the Sovnarkom, likewise decided to crown their protector with a decoration. In the first years of Soviet power, Goloded had been president of the executive committee in the country town of Gori-Gorkiy. In those times partisans still operated in the Belorussian forests, and the Soviets were waging a savage war against them. Because of his public capacity Goloded also took some part in repressing the anti-Soviet partisans. Infected with the example of Sharangovich's decoration Goloded's supporters also began to collect signatures on petitions. Only a small rumor was collected because the sphere of his activity had been limited to one uezd, the "deeds" of Goloded had not had many witnesses, and careful people took a look around anyway, to see how Secretary Gikalo would react to this campaign. The question of decorating Goloded was brought up before the Bureau of the Party Central Committee, but there it was shelved and never put in motion. This was a bitter affront to Goloded, and bad feeling developed between him and Gikalo. However he nursed his malice and did not enter into an open conflict with Gikalo, considering that such a struggle would be dangerous to himself. /46/

From the very first days of his work Gikalo had tried to place his men in the most important sectors of the work. He sent to Moscow for one of his good friends, a certain Posse who graduated from the Institute of Red Professorship /Institut krasnoi professury/. Posse occupied several positions in cultural institutions. He was a lecturer in the Communist university, in the journalistic institute, and also worked in the Institute of Party History. Posse was quite a talented writer and frequently placed his articles in Party organs. He was very active in the uprooting of National-Democracy, and Gikalo used him to exert influence on the cultural front. New faces likewise appeared on the Central Committee staff, placed there by Gikalo. At first they always occupied very inconsequential positions, a certain Lentsner was very characteristic in this respect. Previously he had been Trotsky's private secretary, as people who

were interested in the matter explained it. Lentsner understood full well that having been an intimate of Trotsky would make it very difficult for him to carry on any widespread activities without considerable tenacity on his own part as well as extensive support and backing. Gikalo also took this into account. In addition, Lentsner's energetic nature strove after power, where Gikalo also supported him since he liked Lentsner's assertiveness and evidently had known him before. In order to provide Lentsner with lower-level Party work for a term where he might demonstrate his practical abilities, Gikalo appointed him secretary of the Sennenskii Rayon Party Committee. This rayon occupies a rather prominent place in Belorussia as it is very large and devoted primarily to flax growing. In fulfilling the plans for sowing, harvesting, and, most important of all, for government deliveries, the work of the rayon Party secretary is appreciated very highly. Lentsner appraised the situation correctly. By applying force and using highly repressive measures against the kolkhozes he managed to see that the kolkhozes of the Sennenskii rayon not only fulfilled the plan for linen deliveries of flax but even over-fulfilled it. The rayon participated in numerous other Soviet economic campaigns. After these "victories" Lentsner, in order to publicize his efforts, wrote a pamphlet with the title Iz otstaiushchikh v peredovye /From Lagards to Leaders/. Ostensibly the pamphlet praised the Party leadership, personified by Gikalo, through whose efforts the Sennenskii rayon took the lead in forced deliveries of flax. By means of percentages and figures the results of the efforts of former years were contrasted with the previous year when Lentsner had become Party Secretary. There were a lot of distortions and false comparisons in the pamphlet. In this way Lentsner presented Gikalo with a chance to emphasize his successful choice of Lentsner as rayon secretary, which had been fully justified by experience, and, what is more important, to propose after several months of local level work that the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party appoint Lentsner editor of the Party newspaper Zvezda /The Star/ /47/. Lentsner was recalled from the rayon and confirmed as editor; thus this important and influential position, one which Gikalo was particularly anxious to have occupied by his own man, was filled by a person who owed allegiance to him and was responsive to his instructions. In his new book Lentsner began to copy the methods of the infallible Moskovskaia Pravda /Moscow Pravda/ in full.

557 665 The moment was very appropriate. Stalin had settled accounts with the opposition and become the completely powerful leader. The theory and practice of leadership was picked up and quickly began to spread into the provinces. Even in the innermost rayons, the rural kolkhoz Party members shouted at meetings, "All hail to our leader so-and-so!" Any secretary of the local Party Committee could be considered such a leader. The "leader" accepted all this enthusiasm as his due. The leadership treatment and fawning before Gikalo were of course especially outrageous. Lentsner, as editor of Zvezda /The Star/, lauded Gikalo and spared no words or phrases. His portraits were published in large editions, and clubs, reading rooms, Party and Soviet institutions, schools, and empty shop windows were decorated with them in large quantities. Access to him became a great deal more difficult, and just to see him a special pass was necessary. He did not always receive even responsible Party functionaries. The following incident will attest just how cozy a nest had been feathered by means of 'kadership' and apple polishing. During a banquet, after a session of the Party plenum everyone was shouting, "All hail to our leader, Comrade Gikalo." However there was one member of the banquet who started to quarrel, evidently after considerable intake of alcohol, about the propriety of calling Gikalo a "leader". This incident was immediately brought to the attention of Secretary Sharangovich. The audacious individual was expelled from from the Party, but the affair stretched on for more than a year and finally came to the ears of Moscow. The guilty person was excused by the fact that of course there is only one leader -- Stalin, and although Gikalo is an excellent Party director still he is not a leader. The guilty man was reinstated in the Party, with a reprimand, however, for "quarreling without cause". At the time there were five Party secretaries in various fields of activity, all perpetually guarded by G. P. U. agents.

Purges 1933 and 1934

665 664 In 1933 there was a purge in the Party. Gikalo used it to get rid of certain elements which were troublesome to him and thus to strengthen his own position still further. To attain these ends he selected a commission with particular care. It was important to choose a president /48/ for the purge. In order to settle matters, once and for all with the national movement in Narkompros, the Academy of Sciences, the University, the State Publishing House,

665 A new Party purge took place after the killing of Kirov; it
661 went under the innocent designation of a "certification of Party documents." This purge was not public and had as its slogan -- "Let's put Party affairs in order." Externally it looked as though the Party records and documents were being checked and collated. Accuracy was required in all files. However, in actuality, this was the most terrible purge of all. All Communists who had ever been penalized, those excluded from the Party in the past, ones suspected of nationalistic inclinations, Trotskyism, and those who had come from other parties, all those were under suspicion and had their Party cards taken away. Lists were drawn up of the ones selected, and their expulsion from the Party was legalized by a Central Committee decree. This work was handled by the so-called Commissioner of Party Control, who had taken the place of the Central Control Commission. In some institutions as many as fifty percent were ousted; everything was done behind the scenes, and it was rare that anyone appealed. However, in some isolated cases Gikalo called in the expellees for examination. In Minsk Professor Kaminskii, a man of seventy-five and a specialist on eye diseases, was expelled after an examination of his Party record /51/ on the grounds that before joining the Party he had been in the Bund and in the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. To Gikalo's question as to why he had changed from one party to another he cleverly remarked that all his life he had been seeking the best party and at last had found it ...

Eventually, of course, some of those expelled were reinstated by Moscow, but this took years. In Pravda there appeared articles about excessive zeal, a too formalistic attitude and too little sensitivity, which stated that some honorable people had been expelled.

557 After the check-up of Party documents several commissars
665 were recalled from Belorussia, even though they had not been expelled from the Party and had not suffered any Party penalities. The reasons were deep and secret. Those recalled from Belorussia were Belorussian by nationality. In the past they had not been mixed up in active national work, having on the contrary replaced the commissars who were fired and arrested in 1930. However, during their work they had not practiced indiscriminate defamation of everything national in Belorussia and in many cases quietly encouraged various manifestations of the national work. They had been embittered by the dictatorial tactics of Secretary Gikalo, and there were other motives as well. These commissars had joined forces around Sovnarkom president Goloded, Gikalo's strong and stubborn opponent. They never ceased to regard him as a possible candidate for the post of first party

●587 665 secretary in Belorussia once Sharangovich, after getting his decoration, went over to Gikalo's side. Goloded was a good business man and not a worker in the national movement. While president of the Sovnarkom, in 1928, he carefully studied the economy of the region, aimed to develop industry in the Republic, and supported Belorussian cultural institutions and theaters. Gikalo discerned in Goloded a powerful and influential competitor. However, by his clever tactics during the Party purges Gikalo managed to cut him off from most of his support. Platun was recalled from Narkompros and sent out to Siberia as the boss of the political section of Sovkhoz. D. Chernushevich, the former director of the Cultural and Propaganda Section of the Central Committee, was appointed in his place. People's Commissar of Agriculture Rechitskii was recalled and sent to the Privolzhskaia oblast' to manage transportation. In his place, Goloded's deputy, the Pole Genek, was appointed. The President of the Higher Council of the National Ecomomy /Vysshii Soviet Narodnogo Khoziaistva/ (as the system of industrial administration was called before the organization of special commissariats) Grisevich was appointed director of the political section of some railroad in Siberia. People's Commissar of Health Tsentsiper, a friend of Goloded, was also recalled. A certain Surta was sent out from Moscow to replace him. /52/ All these had been old Belorussian figures. On the eve of the Ezhovshchina they were temporarily faced with honorable exile.

Party Personnel Shifts 1934-1936

In about 1934 the second secretary of the Communist Party Central Committee, Sharangovich, was recalled. His transfer out of Belorussia was evidently the work of first secretary Gikalo. Sharangovich, as has already been indicated, enjoyed some authority among Belorussian workers in the first period of his work. He was considered one of them, and he was also closer to them and more accessible than the Ingush, Gikalo, all the more so since he did not display that particular dislike for the Belorussian movement which Gikalo manifested in his work. (1) Upon Sharangovich's

1. It should be noted even so that in spite of all his "particular dislike for the Belorussian national movement"

567
665

Gikalo shielded Belorussian literature and art, in fact patronized it, similar to one of his followers - Ponomarenko about whom more later.

arrival for work in Belorussia Gikalo, aiming to divide the unity of the Belorussian Communist leaders, tried to attract him to his side, and in this he succeeded almost completely. But in the course of time Sharangovich became superfluous, for Gikalo and for Belorussia. His recall coincided with the reorganization of the Central Party Commission and the Commissariat of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, the so-called Ts. K. K. -R. K. I., which were separated into two independent institutions. Sharangovich was appointed commissioner of party control in Kazakhstan. As secretary of the Belorussian Communist Party his scope of activity had been broader and more varied since every day he had to mix with a number of leading workers and was approached for directives on all problems of Party and Soviet construction. The commissioner of party control worked in a limited field, his job consisting mainly of analyzing all possible infractions of Party ethics and expulsions from the Party, examination of appeals from expulsion, and the imposition of Party penalties. Generally old Party members were appointed to this post, ones who were no longer capable of broad practical activity in other phases of work. On one hand Sharangovich's amour propre was flattered at being appointed as an organ of Party control, at being entrusted by the Kremlin with control functions over the Party in Kazakhstan, but simultaneously he was removed from the political scene, and this did not suit his restless nature.

On Sharangovich's recommendation, the Belorussian, Volkovich, was appointed second secretary of the Central Committee of the Party. Until his appointment Volkovich had been the president of the Bobruysk executive committee and was not widely known. At his new and prominent post he made no impression at all, being sick frequently while Sharangovich was secretary. Belorussian workers had generally come to him to have questions decided, but after his departure not many came to Volkovich, knowing his weak orientation in questions of Soviet and Party construction. All efforts were made to gain admittance to Gikalo himself as he was now the only real Party functionary left in Belorussia. To tell the truth there were still three secretaries left in the Party Central Committee, but they played no conspicuous role since they were occupied with specialized phases of

557 665 activity. Such a one, for example, was the Special Secretary for Transport, Ivanov. He did not concern himself with general Party direction. Thus Gikalo's only opposition was the president of the Sovnarkom, Goloded. Their mutual relations were deteriorating rapidly.

The tense situation in the country at that time became abruptly worse. In Moscow, efforts to annihilate and liquidate the members of the opposition were being intensified. There was a significant shake up of Party leaders in command of military districts throughout the Soviet Union. Heightened "awareness" was being demanded of everyone. Any sort of exposure was encouraged. . . The following incident was typical of Belorussian conditions. Trotsky's former secretary -- a certain Lentsner -- mentioned on page 46, was editor of the Party newspaper, Zvezda. He was a very adroit fellow, and Secretary Gikalo was particularly sympathetic toward him. When the unmasking campaign had reached a rather intense pitch, Gikalo made haste to spirit his favorite out of Belorussia into the Dnepropetrovsk Oblast', doing this without any publicity or the usual Party formalities. Having made arrangements with the secretary of Dnepropetrovsk oblast', a man named Kataevich who was widely known throughout the Soviet Union, Gikalo dispatched Lentsner to him without a decree from the Bureau of the Party Central Committee. There he was given the post of director of the Oblast' Agricultural department. Goloded, being a member of the Party Central Committee, took advantage of this. At a session of the Bureau he demanded to have explained upon what foundation a worker of top Party standing, the editor of the Party newspaper, and appointed to this post by a plenum of the Party Central Committee, /54/ was sent out of Belorussia without the Bureau's sanction. Gikalo was placed in an extremely sensitive position, the more so since Lentsner had such a heavy black mark against him, as friendship with Trotsky was considered to be. In the minutes of the Central Committee Bureau's session Goloded entered his own particular opinion concerning Secretary Gikalo's incorrect activities as manifested in his granting leave to Lentsner and the event became known in the Kremlin since all minutes were sent to the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party in Moscow.

It seems that Secretary Gikalo was recalled from Belorussia in the first part of 1936. He received a post in the Kharkov Oblast' as second secretary of the Party. It was evident to all that he had

537 been demoted . . . Sovnarkom President Goloded had become
565 temporarily unassailable, and in Moscow he was above any sort of suspicion. As for Gikalo, to be changed from party director of a republic to second secretary of an oblast', even one with heavy industry, was considered a step down.

After an absence of more than a year in Kazakhstan, V. Sharangovich was sent by the Kremlin as first secretary of the Central Committee of the Party in Belorussia. It looked as if the Belorussian Communists had attained their heart's desire -- as first secretary they got a Belorussian who for the third time was returning to work in Belorussia. The ensuing year brought with it many griveous changes.

Yezhovshchina - 1937

/this spelling occurs in the original, otherwise
643 the transliteration used is "Ezhovshchina." Translator/

661 In the middle of 1937, the president of the Supreme Soviets of the B. S. S. R. and the U. S. S. R., Aleksandr Grigor'evich Cherviakov, committed suicide. A Belorussian by nationality and born in the village of Dukorka thirty-five kilometers from Minsk, he was a teacher by specialty, having graduated from the normal school in Wilno. In the First World War Cherviakov was an officer. The February Revolution found him in Petrograd where he subsequently organized the Belorussian soldiers of the Petrograd garrison. After the Bolshevik seizure of power Cherviakov entered the Communist Party. When on February 27, 1919, the so-called Lithuanian-Belorussian Soviet Republic was organized on the territory of Lithuania and Belorussia, Cherviakov became Deputy Commissar of Public Education (1). From the day of /55/ the second announce-

1. Immediately before this Cherviakov was Commissar of Public Education in the first government of the B. S. S. R. (cf. Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsikopedia /Large Soviet Encyclopedia/, 1934 Edition, Vol. LXI, page 195/ (sic).

ment of the Belorussian S. S. R. up to his death Cherviakov was the irreplaceable president of the Central Executive Committee and then of the Supreme Soviet of the B. S. S. R. . He was not noted for his revolutionary activities. It is possible that in the

000 decided to give Wilno to Lithuania, knowing that in this way it would become Soviet.

However, before deserting Wilno even temporarily, the military high command of the Red Army picked a special purchasing commission which bought up manufactured articles with captured Polish money. They also bought hides and leather goods, various types of machinery, etc. All the purchases were taken out of Wilno and exported into the center of the Soviet Union. The bigger merchants concealed most of their wares, but their stores were discovered with the aid of their servants (shop assistants). After the termination of the officially-appointed period for the transfer of Wilno to Lithuania the city remained in the hands of the N. K. V. D. for two more days. The latter liquidated all the "unneeded" elements in the city and the prisons.

557
[665]
177

The Communist guidance of the life of the Belorussian people during P. Ponomarenko's term in office, can be characterized as a period of comparative quiet. No one particularly admired his methods or his personality, but there were no disturbing occurrences similar to those which marked the secretaryships of Gikalo and Volkov. The unification of western Belorussia distracted people's attention to a great extent from the various unnecessary experiments and tensions on the old territory of Soviet Belorussia. Everyone who had the chance, particularly the working intelligentsia, writers, poets, theatrical employees, singers, and musicians, used all their pull to get assigned to the newly-attached territory. Most of them wanted to get acquainted with the new capitalist world and see there the horrible suffering and generally pitiable existence of the peasantry and workers. Instead of it they saw, if not an absolutely high standard of living, at least /71/ the possibility of acquiring both food products and other articles for everyday use. These circumstances dispersed the legend of the oppressiveness of capitalism. In accordance with his means everyone tried to get clothes and shoes for himself, and in particular to buy something for his wife and children. Every conceivable employee in Moscow, from the All-Union Commissariats and various trusts right up to deputy commissars tried to get into Western Belorussia. The directors of Belorussian agricultural trusts acquired light cars with small cylinder displacement and often brought them back even to the All-Union Commissars, for a price, of course, but a comparatively low one. This type of light car appeared not

only in Minsk but even in Moscow, and they also got to Moscow by way of western Ukraine. They were considered very useful since they did not consume a lot of scarce gasoline.

As a matter of fact Soviet people could not understand the national antagonisms existing in former Poland. In Soviet Belorussia marriages between Belorussians and Jews were a common occurrence, but there, in western Belorussia, it was considered almost impossible and in any case an occurrence quite out of the ordinary. Some Soviet people were also surprised by the extreme subservience of the local population, particularly the peasantry, before government representatives and city people in general. This was the result of the training given by the Polish regime. Nonetheless a very short period of Soviet rule was sufficient to disappoint the population[1] - the new government caused all wares to disappear in the stores; there were queues for every possible trifle; Soviet currency was almost valueless; all acts committed by local people in the past, even of the most innocent nature, were ferreted out and brought to light if they had any relation with the Soviet government which had not existed on that territory at the time. A broad net of N. K. V. D. informers was spread out everywhere; all peace and quiet was shattered by arrests and the frequent occurrence of unexpected and senseless searches. Universal fear and suspicion soon became entrenched on the occupied territory. The local population, particularly the prosperous upper level and the intelligentsia, was very scornful in its relations with Soviet people, no matter who they were, although this feeling was hidden.

At this point it would be possible to terminate our description of Soviet reality on the eve of the Second World War. Only a few words more need to be said concerning the activity of the N. K. V. D. in this comparatively quiet period. It did not stop its arrests. People were always being snatched away, some because of the testimonies of prisoners arrested during the Exhovshchina, others for listening to foreign radio broadcasts. There was a purge among the workers and employees who had been brought to Minsk from Wilno together with a dismantled radio factory. /72/ Those in whose dossiers there was the slightest, most absurd, evidence from the agents were given particularly careful checkups as well as those who had already served some sentence in a concentration camp.

1 [In western Belorussia, annexed to Soviet Belorussia in 1939. Cf cat. 116, pp. 76-79 -- Analyst]